

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
PRESS CONFERENCE, WITH GENERAL JOHN SHALIKASHVILI, CHAIRMAN, JCS, AND MAJ.
GEN. JAMES ANDRUS, COMMANDER, 3RD AIR FORCE
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KATHLEEN DELASKI: Good afternoon. We're here today to present you with the findings of the Department into the circumstances surrounding the tragic incident in northern Iraq, in which two of our fighters accidentally shot down two of our helicopters.

Reporting to you today will be the Secretary of Defense, and he will introduce the other briefers. I just want to stress at the outset that, in the amount of time that we have for the news conferences, we'll try to give you as much information as possible -- but it is a very complex subject. There's a lot to be said. And so, we provided you with a lot of written materials, which I think will really help you in understanding the issues -- particularly the memos which detail a lot of the actions that are being taken. So, if you need help understanding those afterwards, we're available to help you on that.

And with that, I turn it over to Dr. Perry.

GEN. SHALIKASHVILI: That you very much Kathleen.

As you all know, three months ago, two Blackhawk helicopters lifted off from the ground on a type of mission that they conducted hundreds of times before as part of Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq. On board were 26 men and women -- including a mix of Americans, French, British, Turkish, and Kurdish. A few hours into this mission, two American F-15s, that were enforcing the no fly zone in that region, misidentified the two Blackhawks as Iraqi Hinds, and shot them down. All 26 men and women on board the Blackhawk died.

Hours after that accident, General Shalikashvili and I had the terrible responsibility of standing at this podium to inform you of this tragic incident. At that time, we made three promises -- a promise

to conduct and make public a thorough and exhaustive inquiry into the causes that led to this tragedy; a promise to ensure that corrective actions were taken; and a promise to address accountability.

Today, General Shalikashvili and I stand before you to make good on that first promise. With us today is the commander of the 3rd Air Force, General Andrus. He was the one who led the investigation, and shortly, he will lay out the results of that investigation for you.

General Shalikashvili and I have reviewed the work and recommendations of the investigative team, and we have both formally endorsed the report and accepted its findings. We both agree, as I believe you will on reading it, that it is a full and complete documentation and disclosure of what occurred. The investigation involved 31 people who began that effort the day following the accident. The basic investigative work involved more than 20,000 work hours. They interviewed 137 witnesses. They spent several thousand hours inspecting and testing the equipment involved in the accident, and conducted more than 100 separate airborne tests flying F-15s and Blackhawk helicopters, and another thousand hours of computer simulation. This report tells in great detail the root causes of this tragedy. And it's a tragedy that never should have happened. We are also ready at this time to partially make good on our second promise. General Shalikashvili will explain the corrective actions that he and I have directed worldwide to help prevent an accident of this nature from happening in any of the no-fly zones we enforce.

I have also directed that further investigation be made to determine what lessons we can learn from this tragedy that could lead to corrective actions to other air operations unrelated to Provide Comfort or unrelated to no-fly zone operations. I am particularly concerned with assessing and improving the operational readiness and training of our AWACs aircraft, and in the procedures we use for coordinating joint service air operations, particularly, those involving both fixed wing aircraft and helicopters.

Our third promise was to address accountability, and we have taken today the first step in that, which is the only proper step I can take under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. This investigative report will be the starting point for this process. I have directed that the report be forwarded to the Commander in Chief of USAFE -- that's the U.S. Air Force in Europe; to the Commander of the Air Combat Command and to

the Commander in Chief of the U.S. Army in Europe for determine if what, if any administrative or disciplinary action is warranted in individual cases.

Before we discuss the investigation and corrective actions, let me briefly put Provide Comfort and this report in their proper context. Provide Comfort has been an extraordinary, noble and important effort made by a great correlation. It grew out of the Gulf War as a humanitarian operation to protect the Iraqi Kurds from starvation and murder. Over the period of the last three years, over 50,000 hours have been flown as part of that operation. Countless lives have been saved. Let me add that countless lives continue to depend on this operation and the men and women in our task force as they continue their operations.

From the moment we were first notified of this accident, two concerns were paramount in our minds. First and foremost, was to comfort and to care for the families and the loved ones of those who died. Second was to conduct a thorough investigation to get to the bottom of what happened, not just to find out those who were responsible, but far more critically, to learn everything that went wrong and correct those problems, so that we can minimize the chances of the same kind of accident happening again.

Today we will explain what we learned and what we are doing about it. And we start off with this, I'd like to introduce General Andrus.

GENERAL ANDRUS: Good afternoon, as the secretary indicated, we will be briefing you today on the results of our investigation of the 14 April shoot down of the Black Hawk helicopters. We'll begin by giving you a brief overview of Provide Comfort. Then I'll give you a rather more detailed sequence of events of what took place that morning, and finally, we will end by discussing the causes of the accident. As you will see during the briefing, the accident was caused by a breakdown in command guidance and supervision, and the misidentification of the Black Hawks.

Following the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein began an aggressive campaign against the Kurdish people of Iraq. The world focused on the plight of the Kurds, and the U.N. condemned Iraqi action. A security zone was established which barred Iraqi forces from the area, and a no-fly zone was set up north of the 36th parallel in Iraq. A combined task force was formed that consisted of U.S., Turkish, British and French forces. The task force is headquartered at Incirlik Air Base in Turkey and answers directly to the U.S. European Command.

The combined task force includes an air component also located at Incirlik. The air component commander has tactical control of the

aircraft assigned to Operation Provide Comfort. He is responsible for the scheduling, direction and control of all coalition aircraft operating in the no-fly zone. Most Provide Comfort aircraft to include the E-3 airborne AWACs and the F-15 fighters are located at Incirlik.

The combined task force also includes the Military Coordination Center located at Zakhu, approximately six miles inside the security zone in Iraq. Air transportation for the personnel at the Military Coordination Center is provided by a detachment of Black Hawk Helicopters located at Diyarbakir and Turkey.

Coalition forces conduct daily operations from Incirlik, Diyarbakir and Zakhu into the area of operations. During the past three years coalition resolve has been tested in the area as Iraq has flown aircraft into the area, locked on with their fire control radars onto our aircraft, and has fired at coalition ground personnel. Coalition forces have responded by shooting down an Iraqi MIG-23 and by bombing anti-aircraft and surface to air missile sites. The area is a declared combat zone where coalition forces both on the ground and in the air maintain a high state of readiness.

On the morning of 14 April, AWACs was scheduled to fly from Incirlik to an orbit north of Iraqi border. The AWACs mission that day was to provide surveillance, detection, threat warning and control in the operating area. This included responsibility to track all friendly aircraft.

The AWACs has a complete communications package and can provide radar coverage over a 300 mile radius. In addition, the AWACs can interrogate identification friend or foe equipment on board all Provide Comfort aircraft. The IFF signals are used to identify and track friendly forces. Each aircraft transmits in three separate IFF modes, mode one, two and four, when they are operating in the no-fly zone.

The F-15 mission was to ensure the area was clear of any Iraqi aircraft before the arrival of any Provide Comfort participants. The F-15s were then to maintain a defensive patrol overhead to protect our forces against any possible intrusion of Iraqi aircraft. On the day of the accident, the mission of the Black Hawks was to fly from Diyarbakir to Zakhu, then pick up the Turkish and American co-commanders of the Military Coordination Center and their party, and transport them to the town of Irbil located in the southeastern part of the theater of operation for a meeting with Kurdish representatives.

In reconstructing the sequence of events which we will be discussing next we were aided by witness testimony, documentary and physical evidence and certain tape recordings. AWACs

magnetic data tapes documented the radar and IFF information that we required and used in the investigation. They also document the controller switch actions that were taken during the flight. In addition, the board reviewed a tape from a VHS recorder on board the AWACS. The VHS recorder was running during portions of the accident sequence. Approximately four minutes of that tape, which covered the final portion of the engagement, were recorded over. An individual on the AWACS who had not been part of the shoot down sequence rewound the tape to view it. After it was rewound the camera was turned on to record a later unrelated event. The board found no evidence indicating the tapeover was deliberate. The board was able to reconstruct the accident sequence from other sources of information.

We also used a video tape recording from the F-15 wing man's aircraft which did record the final portions of the engagement. And finally, the board obtained a video tape taken by a Kurdish individual on the ground in the area. The tape did not add information not otherwise available to us in our investigation and was not made part of our report.

In briefing the sequence of events all times will be briefed in local time in Iraq. You should know before we start that the accident took place in clear weather, the visibility was excellent, it was in a mountainous area, and the shoot down itself occurred at approximately 11:30 in the morning.

At 0836 on the 14th, the AWACS departed Incirlik as the first of 52 coalition sorties scheduled to be flown that day. The AWACS performed in-flight equipment checks and then proceeded towards a holding orbit to wait the F-15s. They would then proceed to a surveillance orbit located north of the Iraqi border. At 9:22 the Black Hawk flight departed Diyarbakir enroute to Zakhu. Each aircraft was configured with external fuel tanks for extended range operations.

AWACS made radar and radio contact with the Black Hawks, and a track designation symbol for the Black Hawks was placed on the AWACS radar scopes. AWACS detected the Black Hawks' IFF mode one and mode two. There is no indication that the Black Hawks' mode four was checked. The Black Hawks landed at Zakhu at approximately 10:27.

At 10:35 the F-15 flight left en route to the area. Shortly after takeoff, AWACS established radar and IFF contact with the F-15s.

In Zakhu, the coordination center co-commanders and their party, including U.S., British, French, Turkish, and Kurdish personnel, boarded the two Black Hawks for their flight to Irbil. At 10:54, the Black Hawks took off from Zakhu, contacted AWACS, and reported en route

from Zakhu, to Irbil. AWACS acknowledged that call. At that time they began tracking the Black Hawks again on radar and IFF.

At approximately 11:11, the Black Hawks' route of flight took them into a mountainous, and radar and IFF contacts faded from the AWACS radar scopes.

At 11:20, the F-15s entered the area and notified AWACS. No information concerning the Black Hawk flight already airborne in the area was passed to the F-15s. Although the radar and IFF returns from the Black Hawks had faded from the AWACS scopes, the computer-generated track-designation symbol, that represented the Black Hawk flight, remained.

One minute later, at 11:21, an AWACS controller assumed the helicopters had landed, and dropped the track-designation symbol from the radar scopes. This track symbology was the only remaining reminder to the mission crew that the Black Hawks were operating in the area.

At approximately 11:22, the F-15 lead detected and locked on to a radar contact 40 miles southwest of his position. He checked for IFF modes one and four. The Black Hawks were transmitting a mode one code designated for use in Turkish airspace, rather than the code designated for the tactical area. Therefore the F-15 did not receive a mode one IFF response. The F-15 lead did receive a momentary mode four indication. He continued to check mode four for another four to five seconds with no further results. The F-15s informed AWACS of their radar contact at 40 miles. The AWACS response was, "Clean there," meaning that AWACS had no returns in that area. Our review of the AWACS magnetic data tape indicated there were no radar, IFF, or computer-generated symbols present at the reported location at that time.

At 11:23, intermittent IFF returns from the Black Hawks appeared on the AWACS scopes in the area of the F-15's radar contact. At this time, both F-15 pilots initiated mode one and mode four IFF checks, again with no response.

At 11:25, the AWACS radar scopes displayed the Black Hawks' IFF returns with increased frequency. The F-15 lead reported the radar contact at 20 miles. The AWACS' response was, "It's there," which according to standard terminology meant that AWACS had a radar return at that location. However, our review of the data tapes showed an IFF return at the time of the response.

At 11:26, steady IFF returns and intermittent radar returns from the Black Hawks were displayed on the AWACS radar scopes. These returns were at the same location as the radar contact reported by the F-15 flight. The F-15s were not advised of the presence of IFF data in the target area. The F-15

lead again checked for an IFF mode one and mode four indication; no response was received.

At 11:27, an AWACS controller attempted an IFF identification. Due to the close proximity of the F-15s to the unknown return, the attempt was unsuccessful.

At 11:28, the lead F-15 reported to AWACS that he was visual with the helicopter, and began a visual identification pass. The lead F-15 flew to a position approximately 1,000 feet and 500 feet above the helicopter's flight path. Traveling at 450 knots, the F-15 rapidly overtook the helicopter, which was flying at approximately 130 knots. The F-15 lead misidentified the helicopter and radioed "Hind" followed by "No HIP". Those are NATO designations for Soviet-built helicopters.

The pilot testified that he knew what kind of helicopter he was looking at but could not remember whether it was called a HIP or a Hind. The F-15 lead then started a climbing right-hand turn to set up a race-track pattern behind the helicopter. While in the turn, he looked down, saw a shadow of a second helicopter, and then located the second helicopter. At that time also he took out his visual identification guide to check the correct name of the aircraft he was looking at. The F-15 flight lead then reported "VID," meaning visual identification, "Hind, Tally 2, lead trail."

He next transmitted "Tiger 2" -- which was his wing man's call sign -- "confirm Hinds." The F-15 wing man made a visual identification pass approximately 2,000 feet right and 500 feet above the trailing helicopter. He did not make a positive identification but he did report "Tally 2." AWACS transmitted "Cougar." "Cougar" was the AWACS call sign. "Cougar copies Hinds." The F-15 lead believed his wing man's reply to mean that the identification had been confirmed.

The F-15 lead repositioned behind the Blackhawk flight, called "Engaged" and instructed his wing man to arm hot. At 11:30, the F-15 lead attempted a final ISF mode 1 check and again received no reply. He then fired one radar-guided missile at the trail helicopter. Missile fragments struck the helicopter and it crashed. The F-15 wing man fired one heat-seeking missile at the remaining helicopter. The missile hit the helicopter and it also crashed. Following the shootdown, the F-15s made two visual reconnaissance passes over the crash sites and then continued on their assigned mission.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this briefing, the accident was caused by a breakdown in command guidance, supervision, and the misidentification of the Blackhawks. I will now summarize the causes of the accident. They are divided into three separate areas -- command, AWACS and F-15s.

There were two principal causes in the command area. There was a breakdown in guidance from the combined task force to component organizations including the headquarters staff, the combined forces air component and the military coordination center. At the time of the accident, there was no clear understanding among the task force participants regarding their responsibilities for helicopter flight activities.

Second, component organizations did not fully integrate Blackhawk flights with other air operations in the tactical area of responsibility. Over the three years of Provide Comfort operations, fixed-wing and helicopter activities had developed into two essentially separate operations. The Provide Comfort operations plan, published in 1991, set out the various tasks and responsibilities of the combined task force headquarters in each component organization.

By the fall of 1991, both the operation and the organizational structure had changed. However, the plan was not updated by the command to reflect the changes or reassigned responsibilities. By the time of the accident, senior leaders in the command were unfamiliar with the contents of the plan and their particular responsibilities for coordination and control of Blackhawk helicopters. The operations plan required AWACS warning and control for helicopters operating in the no-fly zone. However, the command routinely permitted the Blackhawks to operate in the area without AWACS coverage.

There was not a clear understanding regarding the application of the air space control orders to Blackhawks. The orders directed that no aircraft would enter the tactical area before fighters had searched the no-fly zone for Iraqi aircraft. However, the command allowed the Blackhawks to enter the area before the fighter sweep. The air tasking order for 14 April did not list specific times or routes of flight for Blackhawks operating in the area. Although the information was available in the task force headquarters, it was not passed to AWACS or to the F-15 pilots.

I will now discuss the AWACS-related causes of the accident. Members of the AWACS mission crew did not understand that the Blackhawks were an integral part of Operation Provide Comfort and did not understand their responsibility to support Blackhawk operations. Supervisors on board the AWACS did not ensure that the controllers working with the F-15s and Blackhawks accomplished their respective duties.

Closely related to the AWACS causes is the fact that the mission crew commander was not mission ready. He had flown only one sortie in the previous three months and did not meet command standards for mission-ready status.

AWACs was responsible for the control of the Blackhawks in the tactical area. However, AWACs did not adequately monitor their locations throughout the flight. AWACs was responsible for checking coalition aircraft inbound to the area for a valid ISF Mode 4. There is no evidence that AWACs checked the Blackhawks' Mode 4.

One of the responsibility of AWACs was to give the F-15s a description of air activity taking place in the tactical areas. AWACs controllers were aware that the Blackhawks were in the area, but did not advise the F-15s of their presence. AWACs crew members had IFS information available which indicated the presence of friendly aircraft at the location of the F-15s' reported radar contact; however, they did not inform the F-15 pilots. There is no indication that anyone on board the AWACs took any action to terminate the engagement or the intercept.

The F-15 related causes are as shown here. The airspace control orders directed that no aircraft would enter the no-fly zone prior to the fighter sweep. The air tacking order did not provide useful information on the Blackhawks operating in the area, and, during checking with AWACs, the F-15s were not advised of the Blackhawks' presence.

Therefore, when the F-15 pilots entered the no-fly zone, they did not expect the Blackhawks to be in the area.

IFS Mode 1 checks by the F-15s were unsuccessful because the Blackhawk aircraft were using a Mode 1 code specified for helicopters outside the tactical area instead of the Mode 1 code specified for aircraft inside the tactical area. The F-15 lead's first IFS Mode 4 check produced a momentary friendly indication, followed by no further Mode 4 indications. The reason for the unsuccessful Mode 4 interrogations could not be determined despite checks of both F-15s, tear-down inspections of all components, computer simulation, and flight testing.

Possible explanations include IFS signals being incorrectly process by the F-15 equipment, terrain masking of the Blackhawks, and garbling of transponder signals from the IFS on the Blackhawks due to the proximity of the two helicopters.

Since December, 1993, there has been little visual recognition training conducted in the F-15 squadron due to unit relocation. Materials that were used for the training did not depict aircraft aspects viewed by the pilot during the intercept or simulate the conditions of speed and distance encountered.

Additionally, the F-15 pilots were not aware that the Blackhawk helicopters were painted in a dark green-black camouflage, as opposed to Iraqi Hinds, which are painted in a light tan and brown desert camouflage.

Hind helicopters have sponsons (ph), or wings, which are used to carry ordnance. Blackhawks can be configured with sponsons (ph) to carry fuel tanks; however, the F-15 pilots were not familiar with the Blackhawk fuel tank configuration. The Blackhawks, as configured, had characteristics similar to Hinds, particularly from the rear aspect.

In addition, the pilots made visual identification passes at distances, altitudes, and speeds which made it unlikely that they would have been able to detect the Blackhawks American flag markings, located on the doors, fuel tanks, underside, and nose of the helicopter.

Finally, when the F-15 lead completed his visual identification pass, he asked his wingman to confirm Hinds. The wingman, who did not make a positive identification, responded, "Tally two," which the lead understood to be confirmation of the identification. Although he had been unable to confirm the identification of the helicopters, the wingman, who was a senior squadron supervisor, allowed the engagement to continue.

For three years, Operation Provide Comfort successfully protected the Kurdish people from the military forces of Iraq. The sequence of events, which ended with the accidental shoot down of two U.S. Blackhawks and the loss of 26 people, was a tragedy. It need not have happened. Our investigation found that there were multiple causes of the shoot down, any one of which -- had it not existed -- may have prevented the accident.

That concludes my briefing.

GEN. SHALIKASHVILI: On Thursday of last week, 7th of July, I forwarded the accident investigation report to Secretary Perry, with the recommendations of General Joulwan, our senior commander in Europe, for correcting the problems within the task force and, more broadly, within the European Command, as well as my own recommended actions to be applied to American forces worldwide.

As General Andrus reports describes, there were a shocking number of instances where individuals failed to do their jobs properly. This fact, I am convinced, more than any other contributing cause led to this tragedy. Had everyone involved been doing their jobs correctly, this tragic accident would not have happened. Now that Secretary Perry has accepted the findings and recommendations of this accident report, it has been forwarded -- as he earlier mentioned -- to the appropriate four star commanders for their review and their legal investigation, and, where warranted, appropriate disciplinary action. Neither the Secretary, nor I, can expand on this legal process beyond what I just said without the fact or the appearance of improper command influence.

Now, as far as the corrective actions are concerned, our first priority was to correct that which had gone so very wrong in northern Iraq. To that end, almost immediately after the accident, new rules of engagement were issued to our European Command that provide greater protection for helicopters. Within the task force, AWACS crews were directed to follow procedures that fully integrate the operation of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft.

Command and control arrangement were revised to provide more effective oversight and direction over the task force. Communications within the task force were simplified, and all aircraft were directed to monitor a common radio frequency so they could communicate directly with one another. In addition, the European Command has taken other steps that include checks to insure that AWACS and flight crews are fully qualified to perform their missions, as well as making revisions to the techniques used by aircraft to visually and electronically identify other aircraft.

However, while these corrective actions in our European Command are on track, we felt very strongly that it would have been a mistake to assume that what happened on the 14th of April in northern Iraq could not happen elsewhere. Therefore, Secretary Perry and I also directed a series of corrective actions aimed at our forces deployed worldwide. We published guidance to our forces that establish procedures and guidelines, that form the very basis of how we operate together to perform our missions.

In this case, our forces were operating under the guidelines that pertained to joint task forces. These guidelines we followed should have ensured the safe integration of different forces and aircraft in the same area of operation. Yet, we found that the members of the task force were not adequately familiar with the guidelines they were given, and failed to follow some critical directives. While proper actions have already been taken to correct that within Europe, more broadly, we have directed a complete review of all task forces operating worldwide to ensure they are complying with published guidance.

Additionally, the higher headquarters of all joint task forces have been directed to ensure that they rigorously and routinely inspect and check their joint task forces. In addition, I have directed the joint staff to examine and, if necessary, to make appropriate changes in the training we use to prepare our officers to serve in joint task forces.

The second problem was the performance of the AWACS crew. General Andrus described this problem in some detail. As a result, we are taking actions to ensure that no other AWACS crews

worldwide, or for that matter, any of the other types of tactical air command and control crews we have in our forces have similar problems. Therefore, we have directed all the services to reexamine how they train and certify their people to perform this very vital function.

The Air Force, specifically, has been directed to use the lessons learned from this tragedy to develop a retraining program for all AWACS personnel, and then to certify the accomplishment of that retraining. The third major problem was the fact that the F-15 pilots did not correctly identify the helicopters as friendly Black Hawks. As a result, the Air Force is well into reviewing and revising the visual identification techniques and procedures with particular emphasis on helicopters. And we have directed the other services to do the same and have it completed by 30 September.

Additionally, we directed them to ensure that our air crews are trained to recognize all kinds and different configurations of aircraft they're likely to encounter in the area in which they might be operating. The fourth problem which General Andrus described were the procedural problems of fast flying, fixed wing aircraft and helicopters operating in the same area. Different procedures were used to command and control these two different kinds of aircraft. This led to confusion at the very moment when the decision had to be made about whether the helicopters were friendly or not.

While the European Command took immediate corrective action to end this problem, I've directed the joint staff to publish new guidelines for worldwide operations that build on the lessons learned from this tragedy, and to create a standard uniform operating procedure. Complementing this effort, Secretary Perry has directed that in this broader sense, I examine the adequacy of our procedures for joint air operations, and to report back to him my findings as soon as possible.

The fifth major problem was the failure of the electronic identification systems. Despite hundreds of hours of testing, we still don't know why the systems failed to alert the F-15 that the helicopters were friendly, and that is particularly most — (inaudible). We will continue to try to find out why the systems didn't function as they were supposed to. But beyond that, we need to develop new and better technology to minimize the chances of this happening again. As many of you know, we have been reviewing technological improvements for these kinds of systems, not just for our air forces, but also for our land forces.

Secretary Perry and I directed the services and the joint staff to expedite these reviews, and to forward recommendations to us by the 30th of September. Secretary Perry has also directed the

Under Secretary for Acquisition and Technology to assure an aggressive acquisition effort to follow up on these recommendations. As well, we directed the services to examine their training on these electronic systems, and to expand their emphasis on the limitations of electronic identification systems.

The corrective actions that I have outlined have been communicated to the service chiefs and our senior commanders worldwide. I have also convened a conference of the joint chiefs and all of our senior commanders later this month. At that meeting, we will review the progress made to date, and we will discuss what we need to do to implement all of these directives by the end of September. Investigating a tragedy of this nature is an enormously difficult and emotionally straining task. I believe, and I hope you share the view that the investigation was methodical, thorough and candid. A wide range of errors and problems were disclosed, including leadership problems that must and will be corrected.

And now, before I turn the floor back to Secretary Perry, let me convey one more time my deepest condolences and sympathies to the families and loved ones of those who died on April the 14th. And as I said on one previous occasion, the loss of these 26 men and women, I think, touches the very fabric of our institution -- the military -- an institution and passion which is to take care of each other, and to make sure that we protect one another from any danger. And so when a tragic incident like this happens it is for us an especially deep loss. But it also moves us on to an unwavering commitment to correct that which went wrong, and that is what we now must pursue. We owe no less to those who died that day. And with that, Mr. Secretary --

SEC. PERRY: Thank you very much, John. The effort led by General Andrus has provided answers to our many questions that are profoundly disturbing. Since we had multiple safeguards built into our procedures in order to prevent such an accident, multiple errors had to occur, and tragically did occur, in order for this accident to happen. There were flaws in the procedures for coordinating joint operations, there were lapses of human judgment, and there were errors in the performance of the air units involved.

In general, the equipment performed to specification, with the exception of a possible failure in one of the four modes of the IFF system. General Andrus has conducted a completely honest and thorough and accurate investigation. General Andrus, you have brought us the sad facts, but in truth your efforts are only the beginning. As General Shalikashvili has already indicated, I have been particularly concerned that the problems

leading to this incident may extend beyond the specific command and theater of operations involved.

You have heard in this briefing many of the corrective actions that have already been taken, and many more that are in progress. But I will not be satisfied until we examine the problems systematically, until we look at how we conduct joint operations across the board, and until we fully address accountability. Every commander at every level should know what needs to be done and that he or she is responsible for getting it done right.

I have already noted that we are now taking the first step in accountability, which is the only proper step I can take at this time. Under our system of military justice any speculation I make at this time as to individual culpability could be considered as command influence and be a basis for appeal of any discipline determined. Therefore I should not and will not make such speculation. But I pledge to you that we will take every action in our power to ensure full accountability, and to ensure that this type of accident is never repeated.

We want to be as forthcoming as possible with the public. The full report you see here, there it is, 21 volumes and more than 3,000 pages, will be available in the reading room in the Pentagon. I am also releasing two videotapes that were used in the investigation, the relevant video of the scopes inside the AWACs, and the F-15 gun camera footage. You already know that we have a four minute gap in the AWACs tape. As you heard from General Andrus, the investigative board stated it has found no evidence indicating the tapeover was deliberate. The board also stated that it was able to reconstruct the accident sequence from other sources of information.

Nevertheless, I believe that this is a matter that must be reviewed further. To that end I have asked the Commander of the Air Combat Command to determine whether any administrative or disciplinary action is appropriate. I want to be fully forthcoming on all of the information available to us, but I must tell you that we are withholding two pieces of information from you and from the public. Within the tape of the F-15 gun camera footage there is a very short audio section after the operation has taken place which included an unprofessional comment by the pilot, which could only be hurtful to the families. This has been deleted, but the rest of the tape is intact. It had nothing -- it had no relevance to the accident investigation.

Many of you have also asked about a video shot that was made by a Kurdish bystander. I have made the decision not to release that. You may disagree, and I want to explain my logic. First of

all this tape was not used in the investigation, and secondly, more importantly, the tape shows little more than grizzly shots of charred wreckage and bodies. I did not want to subject the families to any unnecessary public pain.

Let me speak for a moment to the families of these fallen men and women. Three days after your loved ones perished a moving memorial service was held for them in the City of Zakhu in Northern Iraq. At the memorial service a local religious leader named Sheik Lamit (ph) eulogized your loved ones in a profound and meaningful statement. I would liked to quote that to you now. He said "they came to save us and to give us dignity. Their sacrifice will remain in the minds of our children for the rest of their lives. We will teach their names to our children and keep their names in our books of history as heroes who gave their lives for freedom."

To the families I say you have my personal commitment and the commitment of the entire Department of Defense that your loved ones will not have died in vein. We have learned from this tragedy and we will continue to gain strength from their efforts and their memory.

Now I am ready to take your questions. General Shali and General Andrus, would you come join me.

Q: Mr. Secretary, I have two quick questions. Number one, you've made very clear here that this was a preventable accident. In that light will there be special compensation, special government or military compensation for the people -- for the victims of the accident, financial compensation? And number two, you make clear here that you will ensure that those responsible are held accountable. Without commenting directly, would you rule out the senior commanders, for instance the commander of the air combat command and commander of the U.S. air forces Europe might be called to account for this and in some way punished for lack of oversight?

SEC. PERRY: Let me take the first question. Now we have very rigid and precise legal restrictions on what we can do for compensation of people who are wounded -- who are killed in military operations. We will follow those strictly, they are very restrictive on what we can do in that regard.

On the second question, the issue of the -- basically the question you are asking is my confidence in the senior leadership, in the Secretary of the Air Force, the Commander in Chief in Europe, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force -- the top leadership in this -- I have full and complete confidence in them, continue to have that confidence. They have supported me and will continue to support me in pursuing the corrective actions which we need to take on this operation.

I would like to point out in particular that in assessing -- my assessment of their performance cannot be and should not be based on a single or even several events. It has to be based on an aggregate evaluation of all of their performances through a period of time.

Now, on this one issue, this safety issue in particular, the fact is that the safety record of the United States Air Force has actually been improving through the last number of years, including this year. It may not seem that way to you, but that's what our records show. I will share those records with you in aggregate form. Let me have -- I think we have two charts that are relevant to that point. This represents the history of the last two decades of what are called class A flight mishaps. A class A flight mishap is one in which a fatality is involved. You can see there are some -- two important points about this curve. First of all is that the less decade there's a fairly flat trend, at about half level of the previous decade. And the second, not surprisingly with accidents, there's a certain amount of jaggedness up and down to it. The record -- and this, by the way, is normalized, because it's per 100,000 flying records. The record in '94 to date, including the two major accidents which we've had at Pope and this accident, that killed -- I think there are only one or perhaps two -- two less than that over the previous decade. So that is one important assessment of how well we were doing overall in the Air Force on accidents.

Let me show you one other. This is the one we keep track of the military services. These are active duty deaths all through the military services due to accidents, measured over the last six years. And these are the numbers that reflect the active deaths we've had. You can see here there's a distinct downward trend. And in fact this year, for which we have the first three quarters, it looks like it may be the lowest year in the last six years, even if you were to double this number in the last quarter -- that is still less than any of the previous years. I have also taken this chart and normalized it for the number of people in the service. It shows -- continues to show the same downward trend.

Q: You yourself, and General Shali, called to question AWACS operations were (a lie?). Are you saying that the senior command of AWACS operation -- (inaudible) -- command, might not be responsible or unknowingly responsible?

SEC. PERRY: (?) No, absolutely not. What I am trying to do is distinguish between two different issues. The first issue is does the Air Force overall have an appropriate program, an appropriate training and operation and discipline, relative to readiness and relative to one aspect of readiness, which are accidents. And the answer to that question is

clearly yes, and that's what I hold the senior leadership responsible for. But there's a second question. It's: Were the mistakes made in this operation which should not have been made and which can be corrected and prevented so that we don't repeat them again? And the answer is clearly yes. And most outstanding of those was in the AWACS field, and we will -- I think General Shali has already mentioned specific actions that will be taken in the AWACS. The issue here is not so much how many hours of training AWACS operators have; but we have disclosed was deficiencies in the training -- things that were -- missing from the training that should have been in there, primarily relative to joint training and joint operations and operations between fixed wing and helicopters.

Q: Secretary, I'd like to --

Q: You are a distinguished mathematician by profession, and statistics are a part of that. I'm an old pilot and air traffic controller, and I have had to have a quiver here, particularly because of the lack of a joint or common frequency. And we have had several accidents involving Air Force aircraft, causing loss-of-life labeling, which may not go into your statistics. One of them was an air traffic control problem apparently at Pope.

SEC. PERRY: Yes.

Q: One of them possible grandstanding by a pilot in the state of Washington. I would only ask you outright for this confidence you have of the leadership, including the chief of staff, is that solid, or are you concerned about training and operational readiness?

SEC. PERRY: Let me say again that I think there were many -- one of the reasons that trend that I've shown you is going down is that we learn from accidents, we take corrective actions. We will learn from this one, we will take corrective actions. The air operations we conduct -- we conduct thousands of flights -- thousands of flights. Many of these flights are dangerous flights, have an element of danger to them. Many of them -- all of them, nearly all of them, with high-performance aircraft. Some of them are pressing the edge of the envelope. This is a dangerous operation that's being conducted. There will be accidents.

We cannot compare our standard with commercial air transport. We have to compare it with how we've done in previous years. I've given you a chart which is the best measure I have of whether we are learning and improving. And the evidence is we are learning and improving. And my commitment to you is we will learn further and improve from this accident.

What I will hold General McPeak responsible for is learning from the results, the deficiencies of the

AWACS training here, and improving, so that we will not have this sort of thing. I do not expect our procedures to be perfect and I do not expect Air Force operations to be risk-free or accident-free.

Q: Mr. Secretary, can you or perhaps General Andrus address the issue of distraction that day aboard the AWACS? Apparently they were monitoring other things in the area. They had been on the Turkish side of the border. Apparently there were temperature problems in the aircraft and had been distracted. Can you address some of those things that may have been contributing to what was going on?

GEN. ANDRUS: Yes, sir. We looked into whether or not there may have been distractions. There, in fact, had been Turkish flights operating in the area prior to the arrival of the F-15s. Those flights had departed the area before any of our aircraft arrived. The crew indicated that that was not a distraction.

In reviewing the AWACS audio portion of the videotape, we heard discussions reference "Is it warm enough," "Is it too cold," so forth, in the mission area of the AWACS. This was taking place some minutes before the activity actually occurred. Again, in questioning the AWACS crew, asking them if they were distracted, they did not even remember those discussions. So we had the information, but it was at such a low level for them that they had not remembered it and indicated that they were not distracted.

Q: So everyone was at their scopes; everyone was apparently where they were supposed to be, doing what they were supposed to be doing throughout this sequence.

GEN. ANDRUS: By their testimony, they were at their positions and they were performing their duties. We don't know why some of those --

Q: Did anyone refuse to cooperate? Did any of the subjects of this investigation refuse to cooperate?

GEN. ANDRUS: Every individual, of course, has their rights, and rights protected. We had two individuals that, under advice of counsel, elected to not answer questions to the board. We had a third individual -- again, under advice of counsel -- that elected to not answer two to three questions that we asked.

Q: Were they AWACS?

GEN. ANDRUS: These were individuals on board the AWACS. The information that they could have provided, of course, would have been such things as what they may have been thinking or things that we would not have another way to determine. It did not hinder our investigation.

Q: Is this the military equivalent of Fifth Amendment protection, or is this, in fact, Fifth

Amendment?

GEN. ANDRUS: For every individual that we felt there was even a possibility that there could be any culpability, we ensured that we read them their rights, gave them the opportunity to have counsel. Those that elected to have counsel then, of course, received the guidance that good lawyers give.

Q: General, was there any indication in the traffic from the helicopter that they realized in the helicopter that they were about to come under friendly-fire attack? Or was this a they-did-not-know-what-hit-them situation? And as a follow-up, I would ask at what point did the -- AWACS and/or the F-15s realize that they'd made a mistake?

GEN. ANDRUS: We found no evidence of any radio transmissions between the Blackhawks and the AWACS in those last few minutes before the shootdown. The -- I forgot the second part of your question. I'm sorry.

Q: When did it become apparent to the AWACS and the F-15s that a mistake had been made? Was it later in the day? Was it minutes later?

GEN. ANDRUS: Some 45 minutes to an hour after the actual shootdown, AWACS -- and I believe it was 45 minutes -- AWACS was asked to attempt to locate the Blackhawks. They went through a long sequence over a period of time attempting to contact them on radio. Some hours later, it was determined that the Blackhawks had been shot down. The F-15 pilots completed their mission and were on the ground for some time before they were aware that the Blackhawks had been shot down.

Q: General Andrus, can you comment on whether or not the fighter pilots and the crew members on the AWACS were all active duty? Was there any reservists among them?

GEN. ANDRUS: They were all active duty.

Q: All active duty.

Q: Dr. Perry --

Q: Were they on temporary duty, General? Just to follow up, were they on temporary duty?

GEN. ANDRUS: You mean, were they TDY from other locations? Yes, that's correct.

Q: In your judgment, did that have a bearing on the degree of readiness?

GEN. ANDRUS: No, I don't believe so.

Q: Mr. Secretary, can you detail at all the technological fixes, things that can be done to help prevent this in the future, and who will be in charge of that, since you don't have currently an undersecretary for the acquisition of technology?

SEC. PERRY: That's an important question, and let me try to answer it very carefully. Part of what I will be giving you will be my own personal judgment on what was relatively more important

and what was relatively less important here.

In my judgment, equipment -- there was not -- equipment problems were not the cause of this accident. It's conceivable that they made a small contributory effect in this one so-called Mode 4 of the IFS system, but the equipment in general operated exactly as it was intended to operate. In the case of the F-15s and the missiles, it operated all too well.

Now, in terms of the identification issue, there are three different components to identification. The first is the visual identification, which was obviously done wrong, and all you have to do is go through a simulation of what it is the pilot could see at that distance and that speed to realize he had a faint chance of being able to make that distinction, plus the fact he was not well trained in doing this with fixed -- with helicopter aircraft. So that is a procedure that we need to fix, and General Shalikashvili has already described a program under way to fix it.

Secondly, with respect to the IFS. I consider, in a situation like this, IFS is the backup, rather than the primary, means of identification. Nevertheless, had it been working properly, had the procedures (been stepped ?) so that it was working properly, it could have prevented the accident.

Now, in the IFS, there are two things that we are doing, both of them relatively minor, that will improve the situation with respect to the IFS. One of them is to -- we have a program presently in the OTV, that's Operational Test and Evaluation phase, to make a software improvement in the systems which will incrementally improve the performance and make it somewhat less likely that this kind of a mistake could have happened.

I have directed acceleration of that program, and I expect to see those units start to go into the field this year.

I'm not holding that out as a panacea, I'm just saying that's a modest improvement that can be made and will be made.

We have other improved IFS systems in advanced development phase. First of all, they're very expensive, secondly, they -- it takes a long time to produce them and get them into the field. I would not hold that out as a -- as a reasonable hope for being an improvement anywhere in the foreseeable future. I don't believe it's an important solution to the problem.

The real way of doing this problem, solving the identification problem, is to have situation awareness and have it very, very well. The key to that is AWACs, and had AWACs been operating properly, there would not have been the remotest chance of this operation happening.

Two things to say about the AWACs, important.

First of all, it is clear that there are some aspects of the training for AWACs which are not proper. We need to add. There's some deficiencies and shortages in that training. No matter how many hours of training they get, they're not getting enough training in joint operations and in operations involving helicopters, so we have to revise that part of the training program. That is under way.

Secondly, when we look at the data on the operation of AWAC crews, we find they're being operated beyond the standards which we hold for aircraft crews. We hold 120 days a year as a standard, and AWACs and one other category of aircraft have been consistently operating more than that, and, therefore, I've directed the secretary of the Air Force -- and we will fund this immediately to begin the training -- of more AWACs crews so that we can -- this isn't a question of shortage of aircraft, it's a shortage of AWACs crews, so we will provide more AWACs crews so that the number of days in operation per year will be reduced below standards.

Q: Mr. Secretary, under the shootdown, the pilot has the authority to fire on the helicopters. Are there new rules in place now which will require these pilots to get authority from a higher command structure before firing?

SEC. PERRY: The rules of engagement for this operation were set a good many years ago, recommended by the then-chairman to Secretary Cheney and approved by him. We have subsequently modified those rules. Those rules make it much less likely that a helicopter shoot down will occur; previous rules did not separate out -- discriminate between helicopters. No rules of engagement, if you're engaged in a combat operation, and this was a combat operation, no rules of engagement are foolproof. But they have been modified to make this particular kind of accident less likely. I'd like to ask General Shali to comment further on that.

GEN. SHALIKASHVILI: No, I think, Mr. Secretary, you covered it fully. You understand that the discussion of the specifics of rules of engagement would only endanger the pilots that have to fly in that environment. But what Secretary Perry said is absolutely correct, that the rules have been adjusted immediately after this accident to make that kind of an accident almost impossible.

Q: General, the day of the accident you --

SEC. PERRY: Wait, only (two ?) more questions, because both General Shali and I have an appointment -- (inaudible).

Q: And Mr. Secretary, both, the day of the accident, you both came out here and offered what seemed to be a very detailed explanation of almost a rehearsal that took place in which the AWACs

people were told what the F-15 people were doing, and the Black Hawk helicopter pilots. Can you tell us who gave you that explanation, and how do you -- (inaudible) -- with today's report when it makes it clear that nobody really knew what anybody was doing?

SEC. PERRY: I'll let Shali try that first, and then I'll comment.

GEN. SHALIKASHVILI: The information we gave you was the best information that we had at that time that was provided to us from the area of operations. I cannot tell you specifically who passed it, but I'm perfectly convinced that the people who passed that information to you tried to do their very best as rapidly as possible to get to us, so we could pass something to you. And if you think that there was some sort of attempt to mislead, far from it, because we all knew we're going to stand before you and explain exactly what happened. We gave you the very best information we had, and to the degree that it does not match now the facts that we uncovered as a result of the detailed investigation should only be a lesson to us all that the first information always needs to be held suspect, and that we ought to not make judgements until we have really done all the work and tried to uncover all of it.

Q: The point is, do you believe, either one of you, that you were misled?

GEN. SHALIKASHVILI: Oh, I don't think so. I don't think -- if they intended -- that we were somehow intentionally misled, I do not believe that at all. I believe that people tried to do their very best in an extraordinarily short period of time to pass up here, so we could tell you, as best as we good, what we believed had happened.

SEC. PERRY: We had to make the judgement between saying to you nothing, because we didn't have the full facts, and we had a lot of advice to do just that, and then trying to satisfy your appetite with telling you something. Those of you who were at that hearing know that we were telling you we can't answer that to almost every question. The second specific point is that what was described to you was accurate relative to fixed wing aircraft; it was just helicopters were not included in that, and that we did not know at the time. One last question, yes?

Q: When and what form has this information been reported or conveyed to the other nations who lost people in the helicopters?

SEC. PERRY: Yes, that's a good question. Shali, did you want to answer that?

GEN. SHALIKASHVILI: That information was relayed to the governments involved on Monday, and they've had that information since then. And today, at the same time that we're doing this, they're

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prepared to release it publicly. But their next of kin were briefed -- the next of kin of those who died were briefed at the same as was done here in the United States this morning. And the information is being released publicly at the same time as it is here.

SEC. PERRY: I might add to that that I have spoken to all of the Ministers of Defense of those countries subsequent to their getting the briefing and getting the report. They were very appreciative of the information we're supplying them. Thank you all very much.
END

PRESS ADVISORY

No. 150-P
July 11, 1994

The regularly scheduled Department of Defense news conference for July 12, 1994 is canceled because Secretary of Defense William Perry will be testifying before the Senate Appropriations Committee, Defense Subcommittee at 10 a.m.

On July 13, 1994 at 2 p.m., Secretary of Defense William Perry, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John M. Shalikashvili, and Commander Third Air Force Maj. Gen. James Andrus will conduct a special news conference to announce the results of the Operation Provide Comfort Investigation of the accidental shootdown of the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters on April 14, 1994.

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